Scum o' the Earth

Robert Haven Schauffler

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By Robert Haven Schauffler

SCUM O' THE EARTH AND OTHER POEMS.
THE MUSICAL AMATEUR.

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SCUM O' THE EARTH
AND OTHER POEMS

Drawn by Henry Guy Fangel

Scum o' the Earth

And Other Poems

By Robert Haven Schauffler

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TO THE MEMORY OF MY

MOTHER

CLARA GRAY SCHAUFFLER

POET, MUSICIAN, AND

FRIEND OF THE "SCUM O' THE EARTH"

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I

BROTHER HEIRS

"SCUM O' THE EARTH"

I

At the gate of the West I stand,
On the isle where the nations throng.
We call them "scum o' the earth";

Stay, are we doing you wrong,
Young fellow from Socrates' land? —
You, like a Hermes so lissome and strong
Fresh from the master Praxiteles' hand?
So you're of Spartan birth?
Descended, perhaps, from one of the band —
Deathless in story and song —
Who combed their long hair at Thermopylæ's pass? . . .
Ah, I forget the straits, alas!
More tragic than theirs, more compassion-worth,
That have doomed you to march in our "immigrant class"
Where you're nothing but "scum o' the earth."

II

You Pole with the child on your knee,
What dower bring you to the land of the free?
Hark! does she croon
That sad little tune
That Chopin once found on his Polish lea
And mounted in gold for you and for me?
Now a ragged young fiddler answers
In wild Czech melody
That Dvořak took whole from the dancers.
And the heavy faces bloom
In the wonderful Slavic way;
The little, dull eyes, the brows a-gloom,
Suddenly dawn like the day.
While, watching these folk and their mystery,
I forget that they're nothing worth;
That Bohemians, Slovaks, Croatians,
And men of all Slavic nations
Are "polacks" — and "scum o' the earth."

III

Genoese boy of the level brow,
Lad of the lustrous, dreamy eyes

Astare at Manhattan's pinnacles now
In the first, sweet shock of a hushed surprise;
Within your far-rapt seer's eyes
I catch the glow of the wild surmise
That played on the Santa Maria's prow
In that still gray dawn,
Four centuries gone,
When a world from the wave began to rise.
Oh, it's hard to foretell what high emprise
Is the goal that gleams
When Italy's dreams
Spread wing and sweep into the skies.
Cæsar dreamed him a world ruled well;
Dante dreamed Heaven out of Hell;
Angelo brought us there to dwell;
And you, are you of a different birth? —
You're only a "dago," — and "scum o' the earth"!

IV

Stay, are we doing you wrong
Calling you "scum o' the earth,"
Man of the sorrow-bowed head,
Of the features tender yet strong, —

Man of the eyes full of wisdom and mystery
Mingled with patience and dread?
Have not I known you in history,
Sorrow-bowed head?
Were you the poet-king, worth
Treasures of Ophir unpriced?
Were you the prophet, perchance, whose art
Foretold how the rabble would mock
That shepherd of spirits, erelong,
Who should carry the lambs on his heart
And tenderly feed his flock?
Man — lift that sorrow-bowed head.
Lo! 't is the face of the Christ!

The vision dies at its birth.
You're merely a butt for our mirth.
You're a "sheeny" — and therefore despised
And rejected as "scum o' the earth."

V

Countrymen, bend and invoke
Mercy for us blasphemers,
For that we spat on these marvelous folk,

"SCUM O' THE EARTH"

Nations of darers and dreamers,
Scions of singers and seers,
Our peers, and more than our peers.
"Rabble and refuse," we name them
And "scum o' the earth," to shame them.
Mercy for us of the few, young years,
Of the culture so callow and crude,
Of the hands so grasping and rude,
The lips so ready for sneers
At the sons of our ancient more-than-peers.
Mercy for us who dare despise
Men in whose loins our Homer lies;
Mothers of men who shall bring to us
The glory of Titian, the grandeur of Huss;
Children in whose frail arms shall rest
Prophets and singers and saints of the West.

Newcomers all from the eastern seas,
Help us incarnate dreams like these.
Forget, and forgive, that we did you wrong.
Help us to father a nation, strong
In the comradeship of an equal birth,
In the wealth of the richest bloods of earth.

A PITTSBURG LIBRARY

From your smoky river-height
Radiate both warmth and light:
Warmth of understanding hearts,
Light of learning and the arts;
Beckoning the "scum of earth"
To a day of second birth.

As the furnace-flare below
Glorifies the murky flow
Of Monongahela's stream,
So you light the shadowed faces
Of these folk of sadder races,
Luring them to learn and dream.

TO A DEMOCRATIC MOUNTAIN

(For the guest-book at Brighthurst)

Smouldering flame
Died in the west
As level we came
With this mountain crest
To look on the play
Of myriad stars
In a heaven of earth,
With silvery bars
Where the moon's young girth
On the ripples lay.

Then, — ah, then
In the glimmering day,
The prospect wide
Of the Jersey fen,
Of Newark Bay
And the faëry tide
Of mist that swum
Round lithe-stemmed towers

That decked, like flowers,
The gem-girt slum
Of the city of men: —
Piteous place —
Haunt of proud birth
And the great unblessed,
Of the Tory mind
And the starved and blind,
Of the dizzy with race
And the dizzy with dearth,
And of those whose jest
Is the "scum o' the earth."

How good was flight
From that ill-starred sight!
How blesséd, to share
The catholic air
So large and still
Of Brighthurst's height.

For these who gaze down
On the piteous town
From a summit fairer

Than Tmolus Hill,
Through an ether rarer
Than theirs whom fate
Gives the Golden Horn
Or the Golden Gate —
Hide no smug hate,
Condescension, or scorn
For the "humbly" born,
For the lantern-bearer
From isles of the morn,
For Plato's son,
Leonardo's race,
Or Tolstoy's face; —
For any one
Of whatever birth
Under the sun.
For their hearts have a girth
That encompasses earth.

So, for this height
No benefice
More ample and bright
May be craved than this:

With that bounty of rest,
Of art's living balm
And nature's glad calm, —
With that bounty of peace
And sudden surcease
Of terror and dearth
Wherewith it has blessed
The despised, the oppressed
And rejected of earth: —
With measures like these
Of fortune and mirth
May Brighthurst be blest.

EPIGRAM

(With a handful of Plymouth arbutus)

THE *Mayflower* once filled this shore
With seekers after truth and duty;
And yet, each April, fills it o'er
With seekers after hidden beauty.

Would it had taught the Fathers why
Truth without beauty's half a lie.
And would it might to us express
The beauty of their holiness.

WASHINGTON

Off with the ruffle!
Away with the wig!
No more shall they muffle
The soul of our big
Father of men.
Stockings of silk, —
All of that ilk —
Strip them away
Swift as we may!
Joyously then
Burn the false reams
Of the Reverend Weems, —
Myth of the hatchet, —
Others to match it.
Now see a man
Young for his age,
With a hearty laugh,
Lips that could quaff,
Lips that could rage,
An eye for the stage,

Or a fishing-rod,
A close-run race,
Or a charming face.
No statue, he!
Look, and we see
No carefully shod
Gray demi-god
Carved by smug preachers
And treacherous teachers.
Down with the wig
And the mask of the prig!
Do what they can
To smooth and conceal it,
They're forced to reveal it —
He was a *man!*

His was the kind
Of young man's mind
That never said "die"
As the ice crunched by
And shattered his raft
In the frontier stream.
He but sputtered and laughed

And clove with his friend
By the moon's pale gleam
To the grim swim's end.

None other bore
On that bloody shore
By dread Duquesne
A heart so cool,
A head so high,
(Though fever-sore
And spent with pain)
As Braddock's "fool."

Pray, what kind
But a sportsman's mind
Could so often rebound
At no matter what cost
From shock and disaster
And swiftly re-master
More than was lost,
To the heartening sound
Of the fife's cheery round?
Or was it some nice

Powdered prig in a wig
Poled the Delaware's ice
To the jubilant foe
To bring him that shocking
Torn Christmas stocking
That ruddied the snow?

And, when as Chief
Men labeled him "thief,"
"Ingrate," "traitor,"
"Would-be king,"
"People-hater," —
Everything
That could cause him grief, —
How the serpent's tooth
Devoured his youth!
Mark how he aged,
Agonized, raged,
Swore — for relief —
He had rather be pent
Safe in the womb
Of the wordless tomb
Then be President.

(When burst such a groan
From a statue of stone?)
Yet helmward abided
That sportsman's hand
Until it had guided
The vessel to land.

Here, then, he stands,
The true Washington,
Sire of the lands
Of the North and the South.
Love he commands
As no second one
Under our sun.
Mind not the mouth
So prim and so stern;
An old age heroic
But made it *seem* stoic.
Mark the kind eyes
That glimmer and burn
So wistful and wise
So brimmed with concern,

The brotherly hands
That beckon and yearn.

Ah, no less brotherly hands
Had welded these western lands;
Eyes of no cooler light
Had held these states, by the might
Of their loving, passionate will,
In the cording of common bands.
Full well know we whence came
Those spirits of thunder and flame
That met at Chancellorsville!
Aye, and we know full well
Whence, after that four years' hell,
Came the soul of a later day
When sad Mississippi mothers
And girls with slain sweethearts and brothers
Bore lilies and roses to lay
On the mounds both of Blue and of Gray.

No! 't was no statuesque sire
That left us in Lincoln his son —
A great-heart with malice toward none,

A great-hand with sinews of fire; —
That left us a Roosevelt at need,
When Mammon had blunted the breed,
To rake our souls out of the mire.

Off with the ruffle!
Away with the wig!
No more shall they muffle
The soul of our big
Father of men.
Though they do what they can
To smooth and conceal it,
Manfully, then,
Let us reveal it: —
He was a man!

II

ÉLAN DE VIE

FRIEND SOUL

From the zest of the land of the living,
From work and reflection and play,
From the getting of love and the giving
I hasten away.

For I have a friend from the highland
Who's larked with me long on my plain;
And now to his glamorous sky-land
We're posting amain.

Up yonder his mansions are legion;
Though he's met on the street with a stare
Here, where I'm the lord of the region, —
So turn about's fair.

We leave the snug inn on the highroad.
I wave to my valley with pride.
Then we turn up the beckoning by-road
And swing into stride.

TO MY MOTHER

I SEE your face as on that calmer day
When from my infant eyes it passed away
  Beyond these petty cares and questionings,
  Beyond this sphere of sordid human things, —
The trampled field of time's capricious play.

Bright with more mother-love than tongue can say,
Stern with the sense of foes in strong array,
  Yet hopeful, with no hopefulness earth brings,
    I see your face.

O gracious guarder from the primrose way,
O loving guide when wayward feet would stray,
  O inspiration sweet when the heart sings,
  O patient ministrant to sufferings,
Down the long road, *madonna mia*, may
    I see your face.

A SILENCED SONG

Love stole behind me as I sang
And laid her cool, sweet finger-tips
Lightly upon my careless lips.
There rang
All round about a magic melody
That ever echoes thrillingly in me.

Now since love came my lips are sealed, and fain
Would dumb remain
If so my soul may lose no lightest strain
Of that compelling melody.

THE GLEAM

Follow thy star through life's dark-shadowed hollow;
Follow that gleam though never so faint or far;
With all the might of thy soul-sinew, follow
Thy star!

So shall these narrow confines fail to bound thee;
So shall the fiend set snares for thee in vain;
So shall the nearing choirs of heaven sound thee
A strain.

DUSK AND DAWN

Twilight, and dun, weird tapestries
About the bier of day are drawn.
Night-preludes moan in every breeze,
But in my heart — the dawn.

Night in the dungeon of my brain;
Hope's last pretense long gone;
Despair is knocking, but in vain,
For in my heart — the dawn.

THE DEATH OF ATTAINMENT

(DOUBLE SONNET)

"That sweet bloom of all that is far away."
RUSKIN.

NOT blazing down at noontide, close and keen,
But dust-bedimmed at birth and death of day —
New from the dark or soon to pass away —
The very splendor of the sun is seen.
A desert-garden of beguiling green
Oft vanishes as hot feet haste that way,
And often the first kiss leaves cold and gray
The ashes of a passion that has been.

O sweet, fresh bloom of all at the verge of sight,
Turning to dust as eager fingers greet
What so they longed for. Bitter born of sweet,
When may men come to know your worth aright?
Attainment, clad in robes of dazzling white,
Lures us to her far throne. We clasp her feet,
Only to find her robe her winding-sheet;
Her throne, her tomb, — her kingdom, utter night.

"Would God that I had died for you," we wail,
"Were you alive, here were true paradise."
But lo, a shining presence from that grave
Stands forth, and a great voice — "Attainment dies
Still, as men crown and hail her queen, — to save
Her chosen ones from lives without avail;

To show this frail hour's mutability
Outlined against the grandeur of the past, —
The future's glorious infinitude;
To show that from no vessel earthly-rude,
May man be filled, nor till he quaff at last
Wine of the grapes of God eternally."

ATHENIAN HYMN

(TO THE UNKNOWN GOD)

NIGHT-FOLDED unreality
(If such a phantom-god there be)
We raise our timid song to thee.

They say thy home is in the deep,
Below Poseidon thou dost keep
Thy throne, where sunbeams never sleep.

They say thy home is in the sky;
Thou flashest an all-seeing eye
Down on the peak where Zeus doth lie.

But if thou art so far from here,
That thou to man dost not appear
How is it that we feel thee near,

Or seem to feel, when sinks the heart?
Do we then know thy healing art, —
Or is it of our dreams a part?

Sometimes we seem to feel thee nigh
In moments when the soul mounts high, —
Seem to behold thee eye to eye.

And then thy majesty we deem
More radiant than Apollo's beam
Or the Cloud-Gatherer's lightning gleam.

Then earth returns thy mien to mar,
Leaving thee phantom-like and far,
Like lustre from a hidden star.

MONTE CAVO

(After the Italian of Carducci)

Hail! king of beech trees on this mountain crest,
  Raising aloft thy rugged bole and thick,
  And, like a many-branching candlestick,
Reaching thy gracious arms above the rest.

The young trees murmur and gleam in the sun, and toss,
  Breeze-fondled. Vibrant harmony they sing,
  Stung with desire; and every fibrous thing
Takes, in the sun and the wind, a rarer gloss.

The undulating lines of the foothills join
  The little towns vivaciously together,
  Saluting each by each; and from the nether
Soft sliding shadows seek their vantage-coign.

Good-morrow, Frascati! whose buoyant, teeming air
  Is impregnate with young creativeness.
  When the good autumn comes, your peasants press
Grand liquor from your vineyards everywhere.

Good-morrow, Rocca di Papa! high, so high
You cling upon your crag precipitous,
Like flocks of mountain goats the impetuous
Assault of wolves has come to terrify.

Good-morrow, Marino! and Castel Gandolfo, good-day!
Who offer your lips for the hearty breeze to kiss,
Respecting your ancient, rustic beauty — this
That holds in crescent-wise arms the emerald bay.

Behold Albano, Genzano, and, by the tall bridge,
Arriccia, comrade of Nemi which ruled the towns neighboring
What time the feudal Orsini, mighty laboring,
Piled them a massive stronghold high on the ridge.

Closed in the whorls of the hills as in whorls of a shell,
There the sad waves of the two lakes curl evermore,
Mournfully washing on desolate reaches of shore
Rich on a time with forests no iron dared fell.

Wide the campagna extends, in silence furled —
In silence profound and in its potent peace.
And far beyond the pallid fields one sees
The sacred place that once contained the world.

Lies the City, wrapped in a vaporous shroud,
Like to a person by deep sleep oppressed.
Never an echo carries to this crest
Aught of the mighty clangor of its crowd.

Here it is sweet to lie and quite forget
All of the tumults and annoys of life.
All of the tumult here,— the murmurous strife
Of young leaves that upon the green twigs fret.

By every plant that sheds a murmur dim
Upon the air; by every nimble stem;
By every stone and tree, — by all of them
Is raised a solemn, an imperious hymn:

"*I hymn the candid praises of eternal*
Life that is in the flame and in the spring, —
In insect, ocean, planet, everything, —
In the rude clod and in the Judge supernal;

Of life that knows to whizz and hum and boom.
Eternally it murders and it mates.
In action and in thought it radiates,
And glows within the cradle and the tomb."

Spread over me, O beech, thy mighty arms,
Who viewest from thine height the plains and skies.
This hour is mine, though countless unborn eyes
Shall know in coming centuries thy charms.

THE SOURCE

Unto the blooms of the mystical garden of solace,
Unto the boles of the boundless garden of peace, —
Shut from the rumor of earth's loud pleasures and follies, —
Bourne where earth's passionate discords dwindle and cease, —
Where the fountain of life, more vast than the cup of the ocean,
Is brimming the souls of men with its quickening potion, —
Thither I send my drooping, battle-scarred soul;
Knowing that after one golden hour of ease, —
With the lilt of creation's dawn in its every motion, —
Back shall it wing to me, masterful, buoyant, whole.

NEW GODS FOR OLD

Their God was a god of fire, aloof on a great white throne,
Where a chosen angelical choir sang praises in monotone.
His pity was tyrant's pity. Their tears were bondmen's tears.
And bolts from his luminous city sowed earth with griefs and fears.

Our God is large like the ocean, and we are the waters that run
With a sure, eternal motion to be with a greater at one.
We may scavenge the dross of the nation, we may shudder past bloody sod, —
But we thrill to the new revelation that we are parts of God.

III

THE INFINITE ART

MARSYAS

Moved by the song of breeze-swept wood and wave,
Close to the shingle on a leafy mound
Sat Marsyas. It was the holy hour
When the light hands of two eternities —
The shining future and the shadowy past —
Sweep soft the strings of life, while from their lips
The hymn of sunset rises. On his face, —
Shot with the sparks of joy and dear desire, —
A richer glow than that of westering sun;
For now the mood was on him and he felt
Stirring within, the world-old harmonies.
"O thing of light moving within my breast,"
He sang, "unfathomable gift of song,
Thy spirit is the spirit of the sea
That thralls in his wide lap this little land —
Mighty wave-melodist — with surge-chorales,
With lullabies of foam, war-blasts of surf,
Tender nocturnes of calm; nay, deeper yet,
Yet more compelling than old ocean's throb,
This tide of music surging in my soul.

Apollo, lord of life and light and song,
Fast filling the wide theatre of the west
With echoes of the hymns Olympus hears, —
Thy spirit of supernal melody
Hath glided down some slanting eastward beam
And passed within my breast, — such poems of tone
As thou art wont to make with the young stars
Of morning for a prelude to the dawn.
And now, when I set this captive music free
To fare again to thee, ruler of song,
No mere serenity of godlike bliss
Shall then pervade it wholly, nor the drone
Of passionless existence in the air.
For all the reedy notes I pipe to thee
Shall flame with that strange fire that springs to life
When lip meets human lip. Nor shall the note
Of woe — unknown to thee — be wanting, heard
When hands, unsatisfied, grope in the dark.
And so, perchance, upon a river reed,
My breath may form for thee immortal strains
Touched with the poignance of humanity."

(*Marsyas plays*)

Drawn by these strange, new wood-notes came the god
To see begin that struggle never to end, —
The travail of man's spirit to escape
From the enfolding fetters of the flesh.
He saw a fair, divinely featured man
Playing with delicate fingers on a pipe,
And there on his upturned face a something played
Kin to the radiance of the molten sky.

He ended, and the god took up the strain
With lyre and voice; and then the slight, sweet tune,
Uplifted as on wings, was changed, set free,
Transfigured, till it seemed as though the waves
Of light were waves of sound, swift, passionate,
Intense, tone-radiance flowing from the sun
Without an effort and without a pause;
The glory of the day that crowns the sea
And fills the misty far-off isles with gold.
The gamut of all passion, swiftly swept,
Shone there, a perfect rainbow.
Marsyas
Listened with wonder stealing in his eyes
And joy before undreamed. But suddenly,

As one who in the full, free glow of health
Perceives a fever-venom in his veins,
He felt the fire of that too perfect song
Scorching his very soul. He snatched the reed,
Snapped it and flung it in the tangled grass,
And, tortured, cried, "Woe me, these notes of mine,
Are to Apollo's song mere infant wails
In the vast concord of the choiring worlds.
Though well I know my song might be as his
Could I unmute my soul, brushing aside
These mufflings of inexorable flesh!
Alas, man's art is but a bruiséd reed
Hid in the towering forests of the gods,
Fit only to be snapped and flung aside
And perish in the splendor of the sun!"
With a despairing cry he started up,
And wandered forth into the gathering gloom.
His spirit — tense as lute-strings tightly drawn
That make a mournful music in the wind —
Flayed by the keen, flame-edge of his ideal,
And joyless as the woods before the dawn.

A sudden light, and Marsyas was aware
Close by him of the presence he had shunned.
Who laid aside the lyre, addressing him
With stern benignity in every word:
"Oh, Marsyas, most godlike among men,
I saw thee when thy soul flamed out in song,
Lit by a spark from heaven: and I saw
That fire work devastation in thy breast.
But grudge not thou the price the artist pays
For his diviner moments. 'T is a law,
Immutable and just, that on those waves
That mount the highest, deepest furrows tend;
And ever on the forest floor at noon
The blackest shadows lurk along the roots.
So when thou weighest thy late-quivering songs
In the cool hands of reason, finding them
Scant of the things that make a song divine,
And pangs the common man may never feel
Do violence to thine unarmored spirit,
Be comforted, remembering that thine eyes
Never have looked unblinded on my face,
Free from mist-veilings in the cloudless blue.
For if the soul should move itself aright

And speak from out the breast like god to man,
In sheer expression of the infinite
Man's earth-compacted flesh would melt away
In the fell glare of that apocalypse.
Then, Marsyas, play with lifted heart the notes
'T is given thee to sound for the delight
Of dumb souls groping at expression's gate;
And so thou play'st true artist, at the last,
In perfect measures, unalloyed and free,
Thou too shalt touch the eternal harmonies."

Apollo ceased and smiled upon the man —
First of the race of human artist-kind —
Then took his lyre and passed between the trees,
A brightness in the dull blot of the night,
While wakened breezes whispered among the strings.
But Marsyas heeded not the going god,
For from his eyes looked forth an inner light.

GROWTH

The climax of the perfect symphony
Sounds not at its beginning. Lone and low
The voices enter, ceasing often, so
As young birds newly learning melody.
But others plunge in that harmonious sea;
And now, from crystal tube, and reed, and bow,
And brazen throat, a full concurrent flow
Of music swells in rich sonority.

Soul, fret not if the music of thy life
To thee sound thin and weak. An age remote
Uttered chaotic preludes to these years.
Play well thy part, though with harsh discords rife —
Lo! thou shalt touch a nobler, deeper note,
And join to swell the music of the spheres.

MUSIC

"Music is Love in search of a word."

SIDNEY LANIER.

Is music "love in search of words"? Not so.
For love well knows he never may express
In words a tithe of all his tenderness,
Nor paint in human speech a passion's glow
Lit by his flame. Too deep and still, too low
Even for angels' ears, the sacredness
Of meaning when two hearts together press
And feel from eye to eye love's secret flow.

But music is a house not made with hands,
Built by love's Father, where a little space
The soul may dwell; a royal palace fit
To meet the majesty of its demands;
The place where man's two lives unite; the place
To hold communion with the infinite.

THE SYMPHONY

Carry me home to the pine wood;
  Give me to sleep by the sea;
Leave me alone with the lulling tone
  Of the south wind's phantasy.

For I am weary of discord;
  Sick of the clash of this strife, —
Sick of the bane of this prelude of pain,
  And I yearn for the symphony — *life*.

THE VIOLIN

Sometimes the violin seems to me
A type of what the soul must be

When it has put aside the bark
And come from out the friendly dark

Where wayward forest breezes run —
To lie and mellow in the sun.

The master with unerring hand
Prepares it for the spirit-land.

But ever, as the seasons roll
Their roundelay through branch and bole, —

What though its voice has come to be
The voice of immortality? —

The old old spirit stirs within
The nature of the violin.

And so, as if some dear, dead friend
A word to those behind might send,

It speaks to common human ears
Of morning blessings, evening tears;

And runs, with more than mortal art,
The gamut of the human heart.

'CELLO MOODS

To-day the sense of spring fills all my frame;
And, thrilling, stirs and throbs in me as when
The sap began to course, like liquid flame,
In March, in my old tree-home far from men.
And now my song grows free and clear again
And full of vibrant, vernal murmuring
Reëchoing bird notes out of brake and fen
That tell of youth and young love on the wing
And all the myriad joyous mysteries of spring.

As the fair, sensuous body of the mere
Swerves to the influent moon, as rhyme sways rhyme,
I feel the bounding pulses of the year,
Quick with the boundless vigor of their prime
Beat in their forest ocean. On a time
The warm, rich life of summer surged in me.
And still my finer spirit-senses chime
With subtle instincts of that soulless tree
And the mysterious power that moves the summer sea.

Now through my voice there rings a richer tone.
The lustre of my breast reflects the fires
Of foliage like a royal mantle thrown
To deck my ancient home. My song aspires
To the rare mellowness of autumn choirs,
Enriched by summer's teaching in my wood.
I sing the sober grandeur that attires
The full, fair form of nature's womanhood,
Dreaming the infinite, now first half understood.

The bleak wind moans and from the sodden trees
Where first my maker found me comes a wail
Of winter's bitterness. But not with these
Orphans of summer, smitten by the gale,
Lies now my lot; within the mystic pale
Of art I may forget those forest pains
In voicing forth this time-untrammeled tale
Of dawning love that mounts through bright cloud-lanes
Straight to the upper choirs on radiant music strains.

FOR A VENETIAN PASTORALE

By Giorgione

(In the Louvre)

Play on, my brother, play;
Nor let tone's lulling ecstasy surprise
The singing of thy lute-chords into calm.
How good to float away
An hour from out the thralldom of the eyes;
To taste the balm
Of this benign, unsensual draught of tone;
To wend cool spirit-ways alone,
Unmindful of what glowing mysteries,
What passion flowers are lurking in the grass;
Nor thrill when her rich languorous pipings pass
To merge in thy compelling harmonies.

Play on, my brother, play;
For one swift hour to-day
Our spirits, freed from sight's insistent mesh,
Have overcome the indomitable flesh,

And sensed the end
Whereto our beings tend.
Hark what the noon-stars say.
Play on, my brother, play.

THE MUSIC MAKER

(In memory of an evening at Richard Watson Gilder's home)

Beneath the bow
Your live chords, *'cello mio*, throb and stir, —
My viol-like, dreamful child of Gasparo, —
Raising from reverie your Lombard voice,
And bidding us rejoice,
In all the things of soul and sense that make
These beauty-consecrated chambers glow
As though they were
In your ancestral home by Garda lake.

Now, as beneath the tense exultant fingers,
The music flows or lingers,
The presence of the viol passes quite;
And, for a little space,
Rapt out of touch and sight,
With Bach the master I am face to face.

And now
In ways unlike the labored ways of earth —

I know not how —
That part of man which is most worth
Comes forth at call of this old sarabande
And lays a spirit-hand
With mine upon the strings that understand.
Our painter lends his palette to a tone
That is no more mine own.
Lo! he that 'from the sterile womb of stone
Raises up children unto God' is there
To make this sarabande in form more fair;
And our dear poet with the glowing eyes
Brings to the shrine of tone his evening sacrifice;
While, filling all the place, below, above,
There radiates the starlight of my love.

O comrade heart, shall life be thus when we —
Beyond the portal of eternity —
Shall enter into that long ecstasy?

Shall we float thus upon a flood of tone,
Discumbered of these garments long outgrown,
Alone, yet gloriously un-alone?

Yes, love, we shall re-live this great to-day,
When our sheer souls, in the immortal way,
Have uttered what our lips might never say.

THE END

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Will sing them in the twilight,
. . . Then the little rabbit folk
That some call children,
Such as are up and wide
Will laugh your verses to each other,
Pulling on their shoes for the day's business,
Serious child business that the world
Laughs at, and grows stale;
Such is the tale
— Part of it — of thy song-life."

Ezra Pound, in "A Lume Spento."

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